

Message Text

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ORIGIN INR-10

INFO OCT-01 CCO-00 RSC-01 SS-20 SSO-00 ISO-00 EA-11 NEA-10

EUR-25 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 NSCE-00 INRE-00 OMB-01

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S/S - MR. GAMMON

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE

USLO PEKING PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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TOSEC 313-NO FOREIGN DISSEM-ISLAMABAD ONLY ZFF

E.O. 11652:XGDS 5B(2)

TAGS: VS, PINS, MOPS

SUBJECT: VIETNAM; A LIMITED COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE

ISLAMABAD TOSEC

PEKING FOR HUMMEL

PARIS FOR JEC

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF INR ANALYSIS.

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1. THE RECENT SUCCESSFUL COMMUNIST ATTACKS AGAINST TWO ISOLATED GVN BASES IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS--PLEI DJERENG IN PLEIKU AND BU PRANG IN QUANG DUC--MAY SIGNAL THE BEGINNING OF A LIMITED OFFENSIVE. THIS WOULD BE AIMED AT EXPANDING COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED AREAS, SECURING BADLY NEEDED RICE SUPPLIES, AND DENYING RICE TO THE GVN WHICH ALSO FACES THE PROSPECT OF RICE SHORTAGES. THE ATTACKS MAY ALSO SERVE THE PURPOSE OF PROVOKING GVN RESPONSES THAT WILL OBSCURE THE ORIGINS OF ANY SUBSEQUENT LARGER OFFENSIVE, AND TESTING GVN DEFENSES AND US REACTIONS.

2. PORTENTS FOR THE FUTURE. NUMEROUS RALLIER AND AGENT REPORTS IN RECENT WEEKS HAVE SKETCHED OUT COMMUNIST PLANS TO ATTACK BOTH ISOLATED GVN POSITIONS AND ARVN BASES NEAR POPULATED AREAS DURING NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER. THESE ATTACKS WILL NOT REACH THE SCOPE OF THE SPRING

1972 OFFENSIVE, RELIABLE SOURCES INDICATE, BUT WILL BE AIMED AT TYING DOWN GVN FORCES TO PREVENT THEM FROM ENCROACHING ON COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED AREAS AND TO ENABLE THE VC TO OBTAIN RICE. THE GVN CAMPAIGN OF ROADBLOCKS, SEARCHES, AMBUSHES, RAIDS ON ILLEGAL MARKETS, AND EFFORTS TO CONTROL MERCHANTS' RICE STOCKS HAS SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED VC CONTACT AND TRADE WITH GVN AREAS AND CAUSED THE VC SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN FEEDING THE LARGE NUMBER OF COMMUNIST TROOPS AND OTHER PERSONNEL IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

3. REINFORCING RALLIER AND AGENT REPORTS HAS BEEN A TOUGHER NORTH VIETNAMESE PROPAGANDA LINE AND THE PUBLICATION OF A COSVN ORDER INSTRUCTING COMMUNIST TROOPS TO HEIGHTEN THEIR VIGILANCE AND "FIGHT BACK." IN MID-SEPTEMBER, HANOI PROPAGANDA ENGAGED IN DIRECT ATTACKS ON PRESIDENT NIXON AND SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE SIGNING OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT.

4. LIKELY COURSES OF ACTION. COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA HAS DESCRIBED INCREASED VC/NVA MILITARY ACTIVITY AS A REACTION TO "GVN CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS." COMMUNIST ATTACKS WOULD IN FACT SEEM MOST LIKELY IN PLACES WHERE
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THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES HAVE BEEN PRESSING AGAINST THE VC/NVA SINCE JANUARY. NEAR HUE, WHERE NVA FORCES ARE PARTICULARLY STRONG AND WHERE A MAJOR THRUST WOULD BE EXPECTED IN THE EVENT OF AN ALL-OUT OFFENSIVE, THERE MAY BE ONLY LIGHT TO MODERATE MILITARY ACTIVITY IN THE NEXT SIX TO EIGHT WEEKS BECAUSE OF BAD WEATHER, THE DIFFICULTY OF PENETRATING ARVN DEFENSE LINES WITHOUT A MAJOR EFFORT, AND THE PRESENCE OF SOME OF THE BEST

ARVN UNITS.

5. FURTHER SOUTH, ON THE OTHER HAND, COMMUNIST FORCES APPEAR INTENT ON REVERSING RECENT TRENDS IN FIGHTING FAVORING THE GVN. THE GOVERNMENT HAS MADE SIGNIFICANT GAINS IN QUANG NAM PROVINCE SINCE JANUARY AND THERE ARE NOW REPORTS THAT THE NVA 711TH DIVISION PLANS TO RETAKE MUCH OF THE LOWLAND AREA BY LAUNCHING AN ATTACK THROUGH THE QUE SON VALLEY. THE GVN RECENTLY HAS BEEN PUSHING THE ENEMY TO THE WEST AWAY FROM NATIONAL HIGHWAY ONE IN NORTHERN QUANG NGAI, AND GVN FORCES EXPELLED THE VC/NVA FROM SA HUYNH PORT AREA IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE PROVINCE IN FEBRUARY.

6. IN MR-II, A RECENT RALLIER HAS REPORTED THAT THE NVA 3RD DIVISION MAY SOON LAUNCH ATTACKS IN NORTHERN BINH DINH WHILE MOST OF THE ARVN FORCES NORMALLY DEFENDING THAT AREA ARE IN PLEIKU PROVINCE PARTICIPATING IN AN OPERATION AGAINST THE NVA 320TH DIVISION. THE NVA COULD ALSO TRY AGAIN TO RE-TAKE TERRITORY IN

KONTUM PROVINCE LOST TO THE GVN IN SEPTEMBER. IN MR-III, THERE HAVE BEEN MANY REPORTS OF IMPENDING ATTACKS IN TAY NINH, PHUOC LONG, AND BINH DUONG PROVINCES. IN MR-IV THE COMMUNISTS HAVE BEEN WAGING A STRUGGLE FOR SEVERAL MONTHS FOR CONTROL OF PART OF DINH TUONG PROVINCE AND MAY HAVE RECENTLY REINFORCED NVA UNITS THERE.

7. WHAT DO THE COMMUNISTS EXPECT TO GAIN? ALTHOUGH COMMUNIST MILITARY OBJECTIVES AT THIS TIME ARE CLEARLY LIMITED, THEY MAY BE ABLE TO REGAIN PART OF THE TERRITORY THEY HAVE LOST SINCE JANUARY. MORE IMPORTANT THAN TERRITORIAL GAINS, HOWEVER, THE EXPECTED ATTACKS
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MIGHT ALSO SERVE THE PURPOSE OF TESTING GVN DEFENSES, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN THE APPROACHES TO SAIGON, IN PREPARATION FOR POSSIBLE LARGER ATTACKS TO COME. THE COMMUNISTS MIGHT ALSO WISH TO TEST THE UNITED STATES REACTION TO INCREASED ATTACKS IN VIETNAM WHILE US ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. RUSH

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